IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A backplane for a communications system, ~~wherein the backplane~~ that includes a plurality of differential signal line pairs with each differential signal line pair providing a communications path for a differential signal pair~~that includes a first differential signal line pair having a first differential signal line and a second differential signal line, wherein each differential signal line, of the first differential signal line pair, includes a first end and a second end~~, comprising:

a first differential signal line pair having a first differential signal pair, a first differential signal line and a second differential signal line, wherein each differential signal line, of the first differential signal line pair, includes a first end and a second end;

a second differential signal line pair having a second differential signal pair, a third differential signal line and a fourth differential signal line, wherein each differential signal line, of the second differential signal line pair, includes a first end and a second end;

a plurality of vias, including first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth vias, wherein each via couples a differential signal line to a connector terminal;

the first differential signal line [to] provid[e]ing a communications path for a first signal of [a]the first differential signal pair, wherein the first end of the first differential signal line is coupled to the first via and the second end of the first differential signal line is coupled to the second via;

the[a] second differential signal line [to] provid[e]ing a communications path for a second signal of the first differential signal pair, wherein the first end of the second differential signal line is coupled to the third via and the second end of the second differential signal line is coupled to the fourth via;

the[a] third differential signal line providing a communications path for a third signal of the second differential signal pair~~having a first end and a second end~~, wherein the first end of the third differential signal line is coupled to the fifth via and the second end of the third differential signal line is coupled to the sixth via; and, wherein the first via is spatially located adjacent to the fifth via [such that]to cause the third~~a third~~ signal ~~on the third signal line~~ to have a first amount of coupling~~is coupled~~ to the first signal and wherein the fourth via is spatially located adjacent to the sixth via [such that]to cause the third signal ~~on the third signal line~~ to have a second amount of coupling~~is coupled~~ to the second signal and wherein, without adding coupling specifically for the purpose of reducing crosstalk, the first and second amounts of coupling cause the coupling ~~resulting from the first and fifth vias~~between the third signal and the first signal to be [is] substantially equal to the coupling ~~resulting from the fourth and sixth vias~~between the third signal and second signal.

2. (Currently amended) The backplane of claim 1 further including a plurality of conductor planes wherein the third signal [line] is on a [first] conductor plane of the plurality of conductor planes and the first and second signals ~~differential signal lines~~ are on another ~~second~~ conductor plane of the plurality of conductor planes.

3. (Currently amended) The backplane of claim 1 further including a plurality of conductor planes wherein the third signal [line] is on a [first] conductor plane of the plurality of conductor planes and the first and second signals ~~differential signal lines~~ are on the same[first] conductor plane of the plurality of conductor planes.

4. (Currently amended) The backplane of claim 1 ~~of claim 1~~ wherein the second differential signal line includes a skew adjustment path located between the first end and the second end.

5. (Currently amended) The backplane of claim 4 wherein the lengths of the first and second differential signal lines of the first differential signal line pair are substantially equal.

6. (Original) The backplane of claim 1 wherein the second via is spatially separated from the fifth and sixth vias such that there is substantially no coupling between the first and third signals based on the spatial relationship of the second, fifth and sixth vias.

7. (Original) The backplane of claim 1 wherein the third via is spatially separated

from the fifth and sixth vias such that there is substantially no coupling between the second and third signals based on the spatial relationship of the third, fifth and sixth vias.

8. (Currently amended) A backplane for a communications system, that ~~wherein the backplane~~ includes a plurality of ~~first and second~~ differential signal line pairs with~~,~~ ~~wherein each differential signal line pair includes a first differential signal line and a second differential signal line, with~~ each differential signal line pair providing a communications path for a differential signal pair, comprising:

a first differential signal line pair having a first differential signal pair, a first differential signal line and a second differential signal line, wherein each differential signal line, of the first differential signal line pair, includes a first end and a second end;

a second differential signal line pair having a second differential signal pair, a third differential signal line and a fourth differential signal line, wherein each differential signal line, of the second differential signal line pair, includes a first end and a second end;

a plurality of vias, including first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth vias, wherein each via couples a differential signal line to a connector terminal;

the first differential signal line providing a communications path for a first signal~~of the first differential signal pair~~, wherein the first end of the first differential signal line is coupled to the first via and the second end of the first differential signal line is coupled to the second via;

the second differential signal line providing a communications path for a second signal~~of the first differential signal pair~~, wherein the first end of the second differential signal line is coupled to the third via and the second end of the second differential signal line is coupled to the fourth via;

the third [first] differential signal line providing a communications path for a third signal~~of the second differential signal pair~~, wherein the first end of the third ~~second~~ differential signal line is coupled to the fifth via and the second end of the third [first] differential signal line is coupled to the sixth via;

the fourth ~~second~~ differential signal line providing a communications path for a fourth signal~~of the second differential signal pair~~, wherein the first end of the fourth ~~second~~ differential signal line is coupled to the seventh via and the second end of the fourth ~~second~~ differential signal line is coupled to the eighth via;

wherein:

the first via is spatially located adjacent to the fifth via to cause the third ~~such that a~~ signal to have a first amount of coupling ~~on the first differential signal line of the second differential signal pair is coupled~~ to the first [a] signal~~on the first differential signal line of the first differential signal pair~~;

the second via is spatially located adjacent to the eighth via to cause the fourth ~~such that a~~ signal to have a second amount of coupling ~~on the second differential signal line of the second differential signal pair is coupled~~ to the first signal~~on the first differential signal line of the first differential signal pair~~;

the third via is spatially located adjacent to the seventh via to cause the fourth ~~such that the~~ signal to have a third amount of coupling ~~on the second differential signal line of the second differential signal pair is coupled~~ to the second signal~~on a second differential signal line of the first differential signal pair~~;

the fourth via is spatially located adjacent to the sixth via to cause the third ~~such that the~~ signal to have a fourth amount of coupling ~~on the first differential signal line of the second differential signal pair is coupled~~ to the second signal~~on the second differential signal line of the first differential signal pair~~; and

wherein, without adding coupling specifically for the purpose of reducing crosstalk, a first amount of crosstalk on the first ~~differential~~ signal ~~line of the first differential signal pair~~, that results from the first amount of [via] coupling ~~to the fifth via~~ and the second amount of [via] coupling ~~to the eighth via~~, is substantially equal to a second amount of crosstalk on the second ~~differential~~ signal ~~line of the first differential signal pair~~, that results from the third amount of [via] coupling~~to the seventh via~~ and the fourth amount of [via] coupling ~~to the sixth via~~.

9. (Currently amended) The backplane of claim 8 further including a plurality of conductor planes wherein, for each differential signal line pair, a [the] first ~~and second~~ differential signal line[s] is [are] located on ~~different~~ one of the plurality of conductor planes and a second differential signal line is located on another one of the plurality of conductor planes.

10. (Currently amended) The backplane of claim 8 further including a plurality of conductor planes wherein, for each differential signal line pair, a [the] first and second differential signal line[s] are located on the same one of the plurality of conductor planes.

11. (Previously presented) The backplane of claim 8 wherein the second differential signal line of the first differential signal pair includes a skew adjustment path located between the first end and the second end.

12. (Original) The backplane of claim 11 wherein the lengths of the first and second differential signal lines of the first differential signal pair are substantially equal.

13. (Original) The backplane of claim 11 wherein the first and second differential signal lines of the second differential signal pair include a layout having a topology that corresponds to the topology of the skew adjustment path.

14. (Original) The backplane of claim 13 wherein lengths of each differential signal lines of the first and second differential signal pairs are substantially equal.

15. (Original) The backplane of claim 11 wherein lengths of each differential signal lines of the first and second differential signal pairs are substantially equal.